

themselves off the violation of the innocent. I am reminded of the verse in the Gospels "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul?"

If there is any crime against which the human person revolts, it is the sexual brutalization of children. It is well known that even hardened criminals despise those who have hurt children in this way. Going after those who traffic in children should be a priority for local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies.

This week we are considering the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, a bill put together by my colleague, the senior Senator from Texas. I co-sponsored this legislation because I believe it provides a number of important tools to strengthen our efforts to eradicate trafficking in this country and to help its victims.

This legislation would give law enforcement additional resources for targeting traffickers, including increased access to wiretaps for State and local task forces conducting human trafficking and child pornography investigations, authorization for programs targeting child exploitation, and offering law enforcement training for returning veterans who want to focus on combating human trafficking.

A large portion of the bill is focused on providing assistance to victims as they seek to regain their lives. Among the bill's many victim-related provisions are, first, a deficit-neutral domestic trafficking victims fund to increase the Federal support available to trafficking victims, financed by increased penalties for those convicted of trafficking-related crimes; second, a new block grant program to help State and local governments expand the resources they offer to trafficking victims and strengthen their law enforcement efforts; third, a provision written by my colleague from South Dakota, Representative KRISTI NOEM, that would help expand the extremely limited housing available to recovering underaged trafficking victims; fourth, a notification requirement to ensure that trafficking victims are told of any plea bargains or deferred prosecution agreements in their case; fifth, a provision to give victims of child pornography access to the same services available to trafficking victims by classifying child pornography production as a type of human trafficking; and sixth, a human trafficking advisory council made up of trafficking survivors to make recommendations to the Federal Government.

This legislation has been endorsed by some of the leading organizations in the fight against human trafficking, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Shared Hope International, Rights4Girls, and the National Association to Protect Children. It is also supported by a bipartisan majority here in the Senate, and I am looking forward to passing it in the very near future.

The sooner we get these tools in the hands of law enforcement, the better. If we succeed in anything as a society, it should be in protecting the innocent. I hope this legislation will help advance the fight against trafficking in this country and help promote the healing of human trafficking's many victims.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

PROTECTING STUDENTS FROM SEXUAL AND VIOLENT PREDATORS ACT

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak on S. 474, the Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act. This is a bipartisan bill. It is a bill I introduced with Senator JOE MANCHIN in the last Congress, and we recently reintroduced this bill. We also intend to offer this bill as an amendment to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that the Senator from South Dakota was just discussing.

This is a bill which provides some crucial protections to our children, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of this underlying bill. I am confident it is going to pass, and I certainly hope it will pass with our amendment.

The bipartisan amendment I will be introducing, the Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act, amends the underlying bill to protect even more children. That is what it does. It provides specific protections against convicted child molesters infiltrating our schools.

I will say up front that I fully recognize that the vast majority of school employees would never consider sexually or violently abusing the children in their care. We all understand that, but we also understand that there are pedophiles in this country and they seek out vulnerable children. That is what they do. They know the kids are concentrated in schools with no parents around, and that is what we have to protect these kids against.

I have been fighting for this for over a year now—together with Senator MANCHIN and others—and I will not stop fighting until we get this done. I have three very personal reasons that this fight is one I have taken on and I will continue with, and the personal reasons are my own kids. They are 14, 13, and almost 5 years old. I need to know, just as every parent needs to know, that when we put our child on a schoolbus that child is going somewhere where they are going to be safe, they are going to be protected, and they are not going to be victims, they are not going to fall prey to some of the very people who are supposed to be looking after them.

Unfortunately, for too many kids that is not true today, as is the story of one particular child who inspired this legislation. For a child named Jeremy Bell, the story begins in Delaware County, PA. One of the schoolteachers there molested several boys and raped

one. Prosecutors decided they didn't have enough evidence to bring a case against this monster. The school knew what was going on, so they decided to dismiss the teacher for sexually abusing his students, but then, appallingly, the school decided to make sure he went off and became someone else's problem.

The Pennsylvania school wrote a letter of recommendation for that teacher, who took that letter of recommendation and brought it to the school he applied to work at in West Virginia. He got hired, and over time he became the principal. Well, these kinds of pedophiles do not change their ways, and he didn't change his ways in West Virginia. He continued to prey on kids. Eventually, he raped and then murdered a 12-year-old boy named Jeremy Bell.

Justice eventually caught up with the killer, and he is now serving a life sentence for that murder. But for little Jeremy Bell that justice came too late. And, sadly, Jeremy Bell is not alone. Last year we had 459 school employees across America arrested for sexual misconduct with the very children they are supposed to be protecting and teaching and caring for. That is more than one per day. And those are just the ones where there was enough evidence to actually prosecute, to make an arrest and to pursue charges. How many others were getting away with this?

Frankly, 2015 is not off to a much better start. So far we are 69 days into the new year and there have already been 82 school employees arrested across the country for sexual misconduct with the schoolchildren in their care.

These are not just statistics. These are not just numbers on a page. These are children's lives, every single one of them; such as the little girl whose sexual abuse began at age 10 and only ended when at age 17 she found herself pregnant with the teacher's child; a teacher's aide who raped a young mentally disabled boy in his care; a kindergarten teacher who kept a child during recess and forced her to perform sexual acts on him.

It is hard to even talk about these changes, but they are happening—one school employee after another caught with child pornography. Sometimes these images are of kids who are just 1 year old. This is unbelievable. It is outrageous. But it is happening.

We in Congress have to do what we can to stop this, and we can do something. The Toomey-Manchin protecting students bill takes an important step in the direction of stopping these outrageous acts, and it does so by relying on two mechanisms to accomplish this. The first mechanism is to require schools to do appropriate criminal background checks so we are not knowingly hiring pedophiles in our schools; and the second is to ban this terrible practice by which schools knowingly send a letter of recommendation for

one of these creeps to go somewhere else. They are recommending them so they become someone else's problem.

Neither of these mechanisms should be controversial. The House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill in the last Congress that has both of these mechanisms. I am proud of the fact we have three former House Members who voted for this bill last year who are now cosponsors of our legislation, including the junior Senator from West Virginia, from Colorado, and from Arkansas. I appreciate their support for this commonsense legislation.

Furthermore, a few months ago, every Member of the House and Senate except one voted for even more expansive background checks when we all voted in favor of the Child Care Development Block Grant bill. The combined vote in the House and Senate was 523 to 1. This is not controversial stuff.

So what would we actually do? What does the legislation accomplish? No. 1, criminal background checks. Every State has some kind of criminal background check now, that is true, but it is pretty obvious that many of them are not adequate. For instance, too often there are whole categories of school employees who are not covered by the criminal background check, and too often States don't check all of the criminal databases that are available to them, and so these pedophiles are slipping through the cracks.

The protecting students act requires a school district that wants to take Federal funds to pay its teachers' salaries to perform background checks on all the workers who have unsupervised contact with the children. That would include new hires and existing hires.

Another reality is that many States have only recently adopted these background checks. They have hired employees prior to the legislation requiring the criminal background checks, and some of these employees have this kind of criminal background. Take the case of William Vahey, 64 years old. He taught for decades at some of the world's most elite schools. He started in California and then started working his way across the country. Do you know what he used to do? He used to give his young students Oreo cookies laced with sleeping pills, and when the boys fell asleep he molested them and he photographed it. Scores of children were sexually abused.

This teacher had been convicted for sexual abuse of children when he was in his twenties, but these school districts weren't doing a thorough background check so they weren't discovering these things. Well, the protecting students act ensures sex offenders such as William Vahey will not fall through the cracks. They will be discovered by a more thorough and rigorous background check system that our bill requires.

I should also point out our bill—the protecting students act—requires the schools to do the criminal background checks not just for teachers but for

contractors as well—some schoolbus drivers, coaches, substitute teachers, anyone who comes in unsupervised contact with the kids. There are currently 12 States that have no such requirement at all. They do not check on the backgrounds of their contractors, despite the fact these folks come in regular contact with kids.

Case in point: In Montana, parents got a very rude awakening recently. An audit of Montana's schoolbus drivers found they have 123 drivers with criminal histories, including one driver whose conviction landed him on the Sexual and Violent Offender Registry and one with an outstanding arrest warrant.

Running these background checks on school workers is only going to be helpful if it is thorough, if it is adequate. So what the Toomey-Manchin bill does is it requires the background check include all four of the major crime databases that are available. There is the FBI fingerprint database, the National Sex Offender Registry, the State criminal registry in each State, and the State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry.

This past August parents in Alaska learned that Alaska has an inadequate background check system, and it resulted in a known child rapist teaching in Alaska schools for 4 years. This is unbelievable, but this is what is happening. On August 29, Alaska State troopers arrested a middle school teacher in Kiana, AK. The teacher had fled Missouri 4 years earlier in order to escape an arrest warrant. Multiple witnesses accused the teacher over a decade of sexual and physical abuse of his own adopted children. He had raped and starved these children—his own children. This is unbelievable. The children literally had to burrow a hole in the wall and steal frozen food and warm it up, heat it on a furnace, just to survive.

This monster was able to leave the State and obtain a teaching job in Alaska for 4 years. When asked how in the world this could happen, the Department of Education of Alaska explained: Well, the Alaska background checks looked at the State criminal registry but not the Federal registry. So they had no idea he was a wanton, despicable criminal and had such a record in other States. Had our bill been in force, Alaska would have been required to check the Federal registry. They would have discovered this before ever hiring this monster.

This is the first part of our bill—this requirement we have these background checks. And again, there is nothing controversial here. The House of Representatives passed more expansive language unanimously in the last Congress. And a few months ago, as I mentioned, we had a combined House and Senate vote of 523 votes in favor and 1 vote in opposition to the Child Care Development Block Grant Act which imposes appropriate and rigorous background checks on those caring for our

kids in daycare. That makes perfect sense. We should be screening out pedophiles from working in our daycares, but we also should be providing the same level of protection to kids who are a little bit older, who are in grade school or middle school or high school.

There is a second part to our legislation, and it addresses this outrageous practice of what is known as passing the trash. This is that unbelievable act that resulted in the death of Jeremy Bell, when a letter of recommendation allowed a known pedophile to be employed in West Virginia.

Our bill simply says if a State wants to receive Federal taxpayer money, it can't knowingly help a child molester get a job somewhere else. How can this even be controversial? But the fact is this is an all too prevalent practice, and it is long past time we do something about this.

Two weeks ago, WUSA News 9 reported some shocking news on the public school system of Montgomery County, MD. Since 2011, 21 Montgomery County public school employees or contract workers have been investigated for child sex abuse or exploitation. The news station learned that the Montgomery County public school system "keeps a confidential database of personnel who demonstrate inappropriate or suspicious behavior towards children."

This school system has this watch list of suspected abusers who are working in the area's schools, and WUSA 9 learned the school system had a record, a known record, of passing the trash. For example, elementary school teacher Daniel Picca had been abusing children for 17 years. The school system knew about it. What did they do? The teacher's punishment was to move him from one elementary school to another, again and again and again. There was 17 years of passing a known child molester from 1 school to another. How many kids did he victimize?

This has to stop. It is long overdue we do something about this, and there is a way we can. We can make it illegal to knowingly recommend a pedophile for employment somewhere else. That is what our bill does.

Another example: Recently, in Las Vegas, NV, a kindergarten teacher was arrested for kidnapping a 16-year-old girl and infecting her with a sexually transmitted disease. This same teacher had molested six children—all fourth and fifth graders—several years before, but he did it in the Los Angeles school district. While the Los Angeles school district knew about the allegations in 2009, the school district recommended settling a lawsuit that alleged the teacher had molested these children. The Nevada school district specifically asked: Have there been any criminal concerns regarding this teacher? The Los Angeles school district didn't only hide the truth, they provided three letters of recommendation—three references—for this teacher.

Now for those people who say: Well, the States can fix this problem all on their own, I ask you: What could Nevada do to protect itself from what teachers or school districts are doing in Los Angeles? What could West Virginia have done about a Pennsylvania school district that sent a teacher across the State line with a letter of recommendation? There is nothing one State can do to bind another State. This requires a Federal solution.

Let me sum this up. The Toomey-Manchin bill offers a very simple proposition. If a school district wants to use Federal tax dollars to hire school employees, it has to make sure they are not hiring pedophiles in the process. I think that is pretty reasonable. Specifically, they need to perform background checks on any worker who comes in unsupervised contact with children, and they need to stop passing the trash.

I can't believe this is even controversial. There is nobody who can stand here and say protections against child sex predators are not urgently needed, not in light of the daily revelations we are discovering.

Again, this legislation has overwhelming bipartisan support. It passed the House unanimously. How many bills pass the House unanimously these days? This did. And every Member of the House and Senate except one voted for even more extensive background checks to protect our youngest kids in childcare. Can't we provide the same protection to slightly older kids? The legislation has been endorsed by innumerable child advocate and law enforcement groups, including the National Children's Alliance, which accredits and represents the Nation's 777 child advocacy centers. Yet I am afraid we are probably going to have some opposition voiced about this legislation when we offer the amendment.

Let me be clear. First, we are not opposing a mandate on the States. We don't have the legal authority to do that. What we are simply saying is if States want to take Federal funds, they need to protect children from violent and sexual predators. If States don't want to take those measures, then they can choose not to take Federal funds. If a State has no interest in having a rigorous system for protecting kids, well, that is their decision, but we don't have to send Federal tax dollars to pay the salaries of pedophiles.

Let me conclude. This is a common-sense bill. It is long overdue. It has very broad bipartisan support. It passed the House unanimously. As I said, in this body, all but one Member voted for an even more expansive background check.

Several Senators have voiced some specific concerns, and I am working with several of them. I am willing to work with Senators who want to find ways to constructively improve this bill, but I am not going to support a bill that waters down our ability to

protect our kids from pedophiles in school.

I hope this body will overwhelmingly adopt the legislation that passed the House unanimously, and we can begin to have a more thorough and effective process of protecting our kids.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Is my understanding correct that it is the time for the minority?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct. There is 24 minutes remaining.

Mr. NELSON. I thank the Chair.

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, when 47 Republican Senators signed a letter sent to the Ayatollah Khomeini, it was a letter that although supposedly instructive of the constitutional provisions of the separation of government in the United States, in effect, it was a letter to erode the negotiating position of the President of the United States and his administration in trying to reach an agreement to not have a nuclear weapon capability of building a bomb in Iran.

I think history will show the strength of American foreign policy has always been bipartisanship when it comes to the interests of America as we look out and have to defend ourselves against our enemies. Indeed, Iran with a nuclear bomb would be one of the gravest threats to our national security as well as to our allies. It saddens me that we have come to the point where we are so divided that nearly half of the Senators, on a partisan basis, in this great institution of the U.S. Senate, would in effect try to cut the legs from underneath the President and his administration in trying to reach an agreement to avert a nuclear bomb.

So much has been said about this issue, but one common theme runs throughout, and it is that people seem to know what the agreement is as it is being negotiated in secret. This Senator will reserve judgment. This Senator is also an original cosponsor of the bill we filed to have Congress weigh in on any future lifting of economic sanctions that have been imposed by the Congress, and this Senator feels that is an appropriate role, under the separation of powers, of our job as Congress. But when we see a major part, on a partisan basis, of our government try to undercut and kill the negotiations while they are going on at this very moment in Geneva, then that goes a step too far.

I am saddened. I think about what this Senator would have done when the President was not Barack Obama but George Bush. I cannot imagine that I would have tried to undercut the President of the United States representing this country and trying, on matters of war and peace, to keep peace. We can

disagree about the specifics, but we still have to honor the institution of the Presidency, and when it becomes matters of war and peace, then we have to unify. That is why I am so saddened that we have come to the point at which we appear to be so divided.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Florida for his comments and I echo those this morning.

To the Presiding Officer and to the Members of the Senate, it was 70 years ago this year, in this very Chamber, that the Republican Senator from Michigan, Arthur Vandenberg, gave a speech which has been called the speech heard around the world. Here is how Senator Vandenberg opened that speech:

Mr. President, there are critical moments in the life of every nation which call for the straightest, the plainest, and the most courageous thinking of which we are capable. We confront such a moment now. It is not only desperately important to America, it is important to the world. It is important not only to the generation which lives in blood. It is important to future generations if they shall live in peace.

This was after World War I and World War II, facing the Cold War and many challenges.

Senator Vandenberg was no friend of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was, in fact, the biggest thorn in the President's side. He opposed every New Deal program. He was bitterly opposed to U.S. engagement in Europe before World War II. He was the Nation's most famous isolationist and only moderated his stance after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

But 70 years ago Senator Vandenberg spoke on the floor of the Senate to warn his colleagues about what would happen if the United States of America allowed partisan politics to interfere in our Nation's leadership in the world. He later became the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he coined the phrase "politics stops at the water's edge."

Politics stops at the water's edge.

His wisdom when it came to foreign policy—his understanding that for America to be strong, we must convey strength on the world's stage—earned him a rare recognition, in fact, in this body.

My colleagues will recognize this picture because it is a painting hanging in the room right outside this Chamber. I was honored to be there when it was unveiled—Senator Levin and myself—a few years ago. We are proud of this Republican Senator from Michigan. He has been given an honor that is shared by only a handful of Senators. In our Senate history, out of 1,963 Senators—men and women who have served—only a small group have been honored with a painting, a portrait just outside this Chamber, and he is one of them.

I can only imagine what Senator Vandenberg would say if he were alive